

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

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R 281947Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6648

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 3883

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, AR, UR, PL, CZ

SUBJECT: POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF ARGENTINE MISSION TO EASTERN
EUROPE

REF: A. BA 3290 NOTAL, B. MOSCOW 7389

1. SUMMARY. IN ADDITION TO ECONOMIC GAINS (WHICH WILL BE ANALYZED IN SEPTTEL), ARGENTINE MISSION TO MOSCOW, WARSAW AND PRAGUE ALSO SERVED A NUMBER OF IMPORTANT POLITICAL OBJECTIVES. RATHER THAN INDICATING AN ACTIVE SHIFT TOWARD MOSCOW, IT WAS MEANT MORE TO EMPHASIZE ARGENTINA'S "INDEPENDENT" FOREIGN POLICY AND THUS ADD SUBSTANCE TO HER DECLARED POSITION BETWEEN EAST AND WEST--OR, MORE SPECIFICALLY, BETWEEN WASHINGTON AND MOSCOW. INTERNATIONALLY, THE RED-CARPET RECEPTION ACCORDED THE MISSION ENHANCES ARGENTINA'S PRESTIGE. MORE IMPORTANTLY, IT PLEASE MIGHTILY THE COLLECTIVE ARGENTINE EGO AND FOR MANY ARGENTINES CONFIRMS THE VALIDITY OF PERON'S FOREIGN POLICY. FURTHER, AT A TIME WHEN HE IS CRACKING DOWN ON THE LEFT AT HOME, THE PLAY TO THE EAST IS A USEFUL TACTIC TO

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GUARD AGAINST GAINING THE IMAGE OF RIGHT-WING CAUDILLO. FINALLY, IT

REPRESENTS ANOTHER IN A SERIES OF FOREIGN POLICY MOVES UTILIZED BY PERON'S LIEUTENANTS WITH A VIEW TO ENHANCING THEIR OWN POSITIONS VIS-A-VIS ONE ANOTHER. END SUMMARY

2. ECON MINISTER GELBARD'S REFERENCES TO A 600 MILLION DOLLAR SOVIET CREDIT AND TO PROJECTED EASTERN BLOC CREDITS TALLING UP TO FOUR BILLION DOLLARS OVERALL DOUBTLESS EXAGGERATE CONSIDERABLY THE MAGNITUDE OF THE ECONOMIC BENEFITS WHICH WILL COME ARGENTINA'S WAY AS A RESULT OF THE GELBARD MISSION'S SWING THROUGH THE SOVIET UNION, POLAND AND CZECHOSLOVAKIA. NONETHELESS, THERE ARE SOME DEFINITE PLUSES FOR ARGENTINA IN TERMS OF NEW MARKETS AND SOURCES OF CREDIT. THESE WILL BE ANALYZED IN SEPT. POLITICALLY, TOO, THE GOA MUST SEE THE RESULTS OF THE MISSION TO EASTERN EUROPE AS HAVING REPRESENTED A NET GAIN. CERTAINLY THE RED-CARPET RECEPTION THE MISSION RECEIVED PLEASED THE ARGENTINE EGO AND ENHANCED ITS INTERNATIONAL IMAGE-- AND THAT OF ITS LEADER, GENERAL PERON. SHOULD HE ACTUALLY GO TO MOSCOW NEXT SEP OR OCT, AS ANNOUNCED, THAT STATURE WILL BE FURTHER BURNISHED. BUT IT WAS PROBABLY IN TERMS OF ITS DOMESTIC IMPACT THAT THE TRIP WAS MOST USEFUL TO PERON. THE HONORS PAID TO ARGENTINA IN MOSCOW AND THE OTHER CAPITALS PLEASED EVEN MANY CONSERVATIVE ANTI-PERONISTS, AND SUGGESTED TO THE ARGENTINE PEOPLE THAT PERON'S FOREIGN POLICY COURSE IS THE CORRECT ONE, THAT ARGENTINA IS ALREADY BEGINNING TO REGAIN SOME OF HER LOST STATURE.

3. THE "OPENING TO THE EAST", IF IT CAN BE CALLED THAT, DOES NOT MEAN THAT ARGENTINA IS TO ANY MEANINGFUL DEGREE SHIFTING POLITICALLY TOWARD THE SOVIET UNION. PERON HAS SAID THAT ARGENTINA STANDS BETWEEN WASHINGTON AND MOSCOW, BUT HE HAS NEVER SAID THAT SHE WILL NOT TRADE AND HAVE FULL RELATIONS WITH BOTH, ONLY THAT SHE REJECTED THE DOMINATION OF EITHER. EXPANDING RELATIONS WITH MOSCOW IS DOUBTLESS MEANT TO SIGNAL THAT ARGENTINA'S INDEPENDENT FOREIGN POLICY IS IN FULL SWING AND THAT ARGENTINA DEALS FREELY WITH BOTH SIDES WHILE HERSELF STANDING IN THE MIDDLE. MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE, THEN, IT IS ESSENTIALLY A REAFFIRMATION OF ARGENTINA'S THIRD WORLD POSITION--AND TO MAKE CERTAIN THAT POINT WAS NOT OVERLOOKED, PERON LAST WEEK RECEIVED SIX TOURING AFRICAN AMBASSADORS AND REITERATED ARGENTINE INTEREST IN RELATIONS WITH AFRICA. THE IMAGERY OF THE TRIP, MOREOVER, CONTRIBUTES TO PERON'S "UNIVERSALIST" CONCEPT OF CUTTING ACROSS ALL IDEOLOGICAL FRONTIERS

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(AND EVENTUALLY OF DOING AWAY WITH POLITICAL BORDERS ALTOGETHER).

4. PERHAPS MORE IMPORTANTLY, THE MISSION TO MOSCOW CAME AT PRECISELY THE SAME TIME THAT PERON IS CRACKING DOWN ON THE EXTREME LEFT AT HOME, THUS SUGGESTING THAT IT WAS DESIGNED AT LEAST IN PART TO PROTECT HIS "POPULAR" IMAGE, BOTH AT HOME AND ABROAD. RATIONALLY SPEAKING, THE ONE SHOULD HAVE LITTLE TO DO WITH THE OTHER. THE EXTREME LEFTISTS AGAINST WHOM PERON IS EXERTING INCREASING

PRESSURE LOOK FOR INSPIRATION TO PEKING, HAVANA OR THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL--IF THEY LOOK TO ANYONE. THEY DO NOT LOOK TO MOSCOW. THE LOCAL ORTHODOX COMMUNIST PARTY, WHICH DOES, CONTINUES TO SUPPORT PERON, WITH CERTAIN RESERVATIONS. AS NOTED IN REFTEL A, HOWEVER, THESE ARE NUANCES WHICH ARE LIKELY TO BE OVERLOOKED BY THE GREAT MAJORITY OF ARGENTINES. AN EXPANDED RELATIONSHIP WITH MOSCOW WILL BE SEEN BY MANY AS EVIDENCE IN ITSELF THAT PERON IS NOT SIMPLY ANOTHER RIGHT-WING CAUDILLO. AND AS FOR PERON'S NEW FOUND ASSOCIATES IN THE THIRD WORLD, WITH THE CONFIRMATION OF ARGENTINA'S INDEPENDENT FOREIGN POLICY AND SO LONG AS PERON ARTICULATES AN "ANTI-IMPERIALIST" POSITION, THEY WILL BE LITTLE CONCERNED WITH WHAT HE DOES TO LEFTIST DISSIDENTS AT HOME. INDEED, NASSER AND OTHER THIRD WORLD LEADERS HAVE AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER USED MUCH THE SAME TECHNIQUE--I.E. CRUSHING THE LEFT AT HOME WHILE PURSUING A PROGRESSIVE FOREIGN POLICY AND EXPANDED RELATIONS WITH MOSCOW.

5. INTERESTINGLY, TOO, IN TERMS OF DOMESTIC POLITICS, THE GELBARD MISSION DEMONSTRATED AGAIN THAT FOREIGN SPLASHES ARE BECOMING A FAVORITE MEANS BY WHICH RIVAL MEMBERS OF THE CABINET AND "PALACE ENTOURAGE" STRENGTHEN THEIR POSITIONS VIS-A-VIS ONE ANOTHER. SOME MONTHS BACK, SOCIAL WELFARE MINISTER LOPEZ REGA HAD HIS LIBYAN DIPLOMATIC VICTORY (IF ONE CAN SO DESCRIBE IT). LAST MONTH, FOREIGN MINISTER VIGNES, WHO HAS LITTLE LOVE FOR EITHER TOPEZ REGA OR ECON MIN GELBARD, HAD HIS DAY AT THE MEETINGS OF FOREIGN MINISTERS IN ATLANTA AND WASHINGTON. PRIOR TO THOSE MEETINGS, THERE HAD BEEN RUMORS THAT VIGNES MIGHT BE REPLACED. AFTER HIS TRIUMPHANT RETURN, THE RUMORS STOPPED. NOW GELBARD HAS RETURNED FROM MOSCOW AND THE EASTERN EUROPEAN CAPITALS WITH ECONOMIC BENEFITS AND INTERNATIONAL LAURELS FOR ARGENTINA--AND A GOOD DEAL OF PUBLICITY FOR HIMSELF. WITH HIS TRIUMPH, THE RUMORS CONCERNING THE STANDING OF HIS RIVAL, VIGNES, HAVE RESUMED. AS USUAL, THESE RUMORS ARE BEING FANNED

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MOST ENERGETICALLY BY BEGIN UNDERLINE LA OPINION, END UNDERLINE WHICH IS REGARDED AS GELBARD'S MOUTHPIECE. WHETHER THERE IS ANYTHING TO THESE RUMORS IS DIFFICULT TO SAY AT THIS TIME. THE INTERESTING THING, HOWEVER, IS THAT THEY SEEM TO HAVE BEEN TRIGGERED INITIALLY BY GELBARD'S SUCCESSES IN EASTERN EUROPE. NOW LOPEZ REGA AND VICE PRESIDENT MARIA ESTELA MARTINEZ DE PERON, APPARENTLY FEELING LEFT OUT OF THE FRAY, HAVE ANNOUNCED THAT THEY WILL BE TRAVELLING TO ROME NEXT MONTH. MEANWHILE, PERON CAN SIT BACK COMFORTABLY, SECURE IN THE KNOWLEDGE THAT NO MATTER HOW WARMLY HIS LIEUTENANTS ARE RECEIVED ABROAD, THE KUDOS ARE MORE FOR HIM THAN FOR THEM AND THE TRIUMPH IS HIS--AND THAT IF ANY OF THEM BEGIN TO THINK OTHERWISE, HE CAN ALWAYS CHOP THEM DOWN TO SIZE.

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